GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1637
ANSWERED ON:28.11.2007
STREAMLINING PASSPORT OFFICES
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some passport offices have issued passports of same number to many persons as reported in the Times of India, dated November 12, 2007;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any nexus between the passport issuing staff and travel agents in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to streamline the functioning of passport offices throughout the country;

(e) whether any complaints have been received regarding hardships faced by the passport applicants; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) & (b) India Security Press Nashik had printed Jumbo passport booklets bearing numbers from Z-000001 to Z-056000 in 2006. The booklet numbers were a 'repeat' series of an earlier series issued by India Security Press, Nashik in 1995. As this resulted in problems at immigration counters for some citizens, the Government have instructed all Passport Issuing Authorities in India and abroad not to issue any of the 'repeat' series printed in 2006. The Passport Issuing Authorities were also instructed to recall the passport booklets already issued to citizens and to issue to them new passports gratis.

(c) & (d) As regards corrupt practices between the Passport issuing staff and travel agents, whenever such instances come to the notice of the Government, action against errant officials is taken immediately by sanctioning prosecution by the concerned agencies or through disciplinary proceedings, as required. The Government have also been taking a number of corrective measures to check malpractices and deficiencies in Passport Offices, such as regular and surprise inspections including vigilance inspections of Passport Offices, strengthening of vigilance mechanism in the Central Passport Organization and ensuring greater accountability in the working of Passport Offices.

(e) & (f) Whenever complaints are received by the Government regarding hardships faced by passport applicants, suitable remedial measures are taken immediately.

The Government are aware that the applicants at times face some delay in issuance of passports. The reasons include delays in receipt of Police Verification Reports (PVRs) and adverse or incomplete PVRs, incomplete information and/or documents furnished by the applicants. Rapidly growing workload of the Passport Offices is also contributing to pendencies. The number of passports issued by Central Passport Organization went up by 24.4% in 2006 as compared to the corresponding figure of 2005 (from 35.7 lakhs in 2005 to 44.41 lakhs in 2006).

Passport Offices have been instructed and offered assistance from time to time to clear any backlog resulting from rush of applications. The pendency figure is being closely monitored by the Ministry on a weekly basis.